



Hot Issue Presentation

On
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By
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A**bstract:** Since establishment of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 1996 with 26 parties, under the concept **Towards a New Strategy for Asia** and then entitled, **Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships**, reaffirmed this objective.

K**eywords:** ASEM, ASEM meeting, 9th ASEM Meeting in Laos.

I. Overview

The **Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM)** was officially established in 1996 at the first summit in Bangkok. ASEM is an interregional forum which consists of the European Commission, the twenty-seven members of the European Union (EU), the thirteen members of the ASEAN Plus Three regional grouping,^[1] as of 2008, India, Mongolia, and Pakistan, and as of 2010, Australia, Russia and New Zealand.

The initial ASEM partnership in 1996 consisted of 15 EU member states and 7 ASEAN member states plus China, Korea, Japan and the European Commission.

The ASEM dialogue addresses political, economic and cultural issues, with the objective of strengthening the relationship between our two regions, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership.

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The origins of the ASEM process lay in a mutual recognition, in both Asia and Europe, that the relationship between the two regions needed to be strengthened, reflecting the new global context of the 1990s, and the perspectives of the new century. In July 1994, the European Commission had already published **Towards a New Strategy for Asia**, stressing the importance of modernizing our relationship with Asia, and of reflecting properly its political, economic and cultural significance. The Commission Communication of September 2001, entitled, **Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships**, reaffirmed this objective.

The main components of the ASEM process, which has so far been loosely organized, include:

- political dialogue
 - security and the economy
 - education and culture
- } or the so-called three pillars.

In general, the process is considered by the parties involved to be a way of deepening the relations between Asia and Europe at all levels, which is deemed necessary to achieve a more balanced political and economic world order. The process is enhanced by the biannual meetings of heads of state, alternately in Europe and Asia, and political, economic, and cultural meetings and events at all kinds of other levels.

II. Members

ASEM currently has 48 partners: 46 countries and 2 international organizations. The partners are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, **Laos (2004)**, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, European Commission and ASEAN Secretariat.



ASEM Expansion

At the 5th ASEM Summit in Hanoi (October 2004), the ASEM process expanded from twenty-six to thirty-nine countries, including the ten new members of the European Union, as well as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. The second round of enlargement happened in October 2007, when India, Pakistan, Mongolia, Romania, Bulgaria and the ASEAN Secretariat was officially welcomed into ASEM. During the 8th ASEM Summit held in Brussels (October 2010), three new members joined the ASEM process: Australia, New Zealand and Russia. This third round of enlargement increased the membership to 48 partners.

III. ASEM Logo



◆ History of ASEM Logo

The idea for an ASEM logo came at the ASEM Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) in response to the need of having a logo that can represent visually the state of Euro-Asian dialogue and understanding and be inspired by the age-old "East meets West" motive. The SOM leaders subsequently commissioned the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) to hold an ASEM Logo Competition. In a quest for a permanent logo to represent ASEM process, the search went out for designers from Asia and Europe to get together in collaboration. The competition was announced in 2001 through various newspapers, websites and e-newsletter, and all in all, 300 entries were received by the closing date of the competition in December 2002. The top three entries, selected by an independent panel of design and branding experts, were presented at the ASEM SOM in 2003, and the final logo was selected and revealed at the 5th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 22nd-24th July 2003 in Bali, Indonesia.

◆ ASEM Logo's significance

ASEM logo expresses the idea of interaction between Europe and Asia through the intertwined forms of an Asian brush-stroke and a simplified roman "E". These also combine to form letter "A" and "E", symbolising Asia and Europe. The logo represents two different yet intertwined cultures of East and West seeking ways to come together to interact. The colours of the logo - blue and red - represent Europe and Asia respectfully.

◆ Use of the Logo

The governments of ASEM partners are given the rights to use the logo for ASEM meetings and other activities for ASEM that are commonly recognised by all of ASEM partners. The only physical institution of ASEM, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), is also given the rights to use the logo in its activities. ASEF also currently retains the copyright of ASEM logo on behalf of ASEM partners.

IV. Achievements

◆ A Dialogue Facilitator

ASEM covers potentially all issues of common interest to Europe and Asia. ASEM has provided a dialogue platform to address international matters such as United Nations reforms, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) issues, terrorism, migration flows or WTO negotiations. Asia and Europe have worked together for improving the international security environment. Overall, ASEM has become a useful process for managing globalization and its effects, for enhancing interregional and international business frameworks, and promoting the role of Euro in Asia. ASEM is also about people and culture. It has served as a dialogue facilitator and helped increasing mutual understanding through people-to-people contacts.

In that context, ASEM should be considered as a dialogue process as well as a delivery instrument. In fact, since no formal negotiations take place within ASEM, it is difficult to quantify the real contribution of ASEM on a particular issue. The delivery aspect of ASEM is not always visible since concrete developments may occur elsewhere in a more formal setting.

◆ A Policy-Making Laboratory

ASEM is a policy-making laboratory. By promoting an open and inclusive dialogue, ASEM has allowed its participants to develop and test new ideas for future policy-making. By creating a permanent process of consultation, ASEM has helped to streamline the international agenda. As a forum promoting an open and informal dialogue, ASEM provides an opportunity to work towards negotiated solutions, especially in areas of disagreement.

It provides additional consultation opportunities before official negotiations take place at a multilateral conference. Because ASEM remains an informal dialogue-based process, there is no formal or structured agenda. One specific institution, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), has been created in response to Summit decisions.

ASEM also creates opportunities for exchanging experiences and share knowledge. It facilitates some transfer of technology to Asian countries who have shown interest in the European regional integration developments. In the meantime, European partners can gain a

better understanding of regional developments in Asia and the perspectives of Asia's regional integration. ASEM helps to build common knowledge on specific issues too. This feature might play a growing role in an enlarged ASEM, especially on trans-national and security issues, in particular for the fight against international terrorism.

◆ **Managing Growing Europe-Asia Relations**

ASEM was established as a new process between Asia-Europe, which complements existing Europe-Asia relations. ASEM is not a substitute for other bilateral or multilateral forums between Asia and Europe, and it can best work to facilitate and stimulate progress in other areas. As a new layer of dialogue and cooperation, ASEM has enhanced synergies in Europe-Asia relations. ASEM has also served as catalyst for overall Asia-Europe relations and complements other levels of relations between the two regions.

ASEM has helped Europe and Asia to have a more global vision of the two regions. By remaining an informal dialogue-based process, ASEM aims to promote overall Asia-Europe relations on international and inter-regional issues of common interest. By bringing together different Cultures and Civilizations, ASEM is a unique process to foster common understanding and dialogue.

❖ *Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework 2000*

ASEM established the **Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework (AECF)** was adopted at the ASEM3 Summit in Seoul, Korea (20-21 Oct 2000) to set the vision, principles, objectives, priorities and mechanisms for the ASEM process for the first decade of the new millennium.

❖ *Key Characteristics*

Key characteristics of the ASEM process include:

◆ **Informality**

It provides a open forum for policy makers and officials to discuss any political, economy and social issues of common interest. In this way, it complements rather than duplicates the work already being carried out in bilateral and multilateral.

◆ **Multi-dimensionality**

It covers the full spectrum of relations between the two regions and devotes equal weight to political, economic and cultural dimensions.

◆ **Emphasis on equal partnership**

It eschews any "aid-based" relationship taken forward under our bilateral relations in favor of a more general process of dialogue and co-operation based on mutual respect and mutual benefit.

◆ **Dual focus on high-level and people-to-people**

It provides a platform for meeting of heads of states or governments, ministers and seniors officials, and with an increasing focus on fostering contacts between societies in all sectors in the two regions.

❖ ***Working Methods***

As agreed by Foreign Ministers in Beijing, and bearing in mind the purposes and guiding principles of the ASEM process established at the previous Summits and Foreign Ministers' Meetings, including in the AECF 2000, and with a view to further consolidating the process, the Senior Officials recommended the following measures to improve the ASEM working methods:

1. Meetings should be more informal and interactive. To this end the Chair should be active in realizing this goal. Appropriate informal intervals and retreat sessions could be useful tools.
2. By setting focused agendas with a few topics, ASEM added value will be assured for all meetings. ASEM partners could also consult regularly before international meetings.
3. ASEM activities/initiatives should be linked to the dialogue and be supportive of it. Presenting activities in clusters can facilitate reaching synergies within the ASEM process but also within a cluster; organizers/facilitators especially within a cluster are invited to consult in particular on agendas and timing.
4. In order to gain more time for dialogue the Chair shall be responsible for reflecting fairly the outcome of meetings in short and factual statements. For Summits and Ministers' meetings consensus on Chair Statements (CS) should be reached through close coordination among partners. However, it was confirmed at the meeting that consensus shall not be interpreted as meaning that texts would be negotiated word for word. Separate negotiated political declarations on specific subjects in addition to CS, if appropriate, could be issued, thereby raising the visibility of the issue treated.
5. In order to raise the visibility of ASEM, reaching out to the public is necessary. The Senior Officials saw the importance of involvement of various sectors of society in the ASEM process. On the occasion of ASEM events, host countries may, at their discretion, organize activities with business, think tanks and other sectors of society. These events will be open to all ASEM partners.

These conclusions are based on a thorough discussion among all ASEM partners of the so called VADEMECUM - Modalities for Future ASEM Dialogue; Taking the Process Forward.

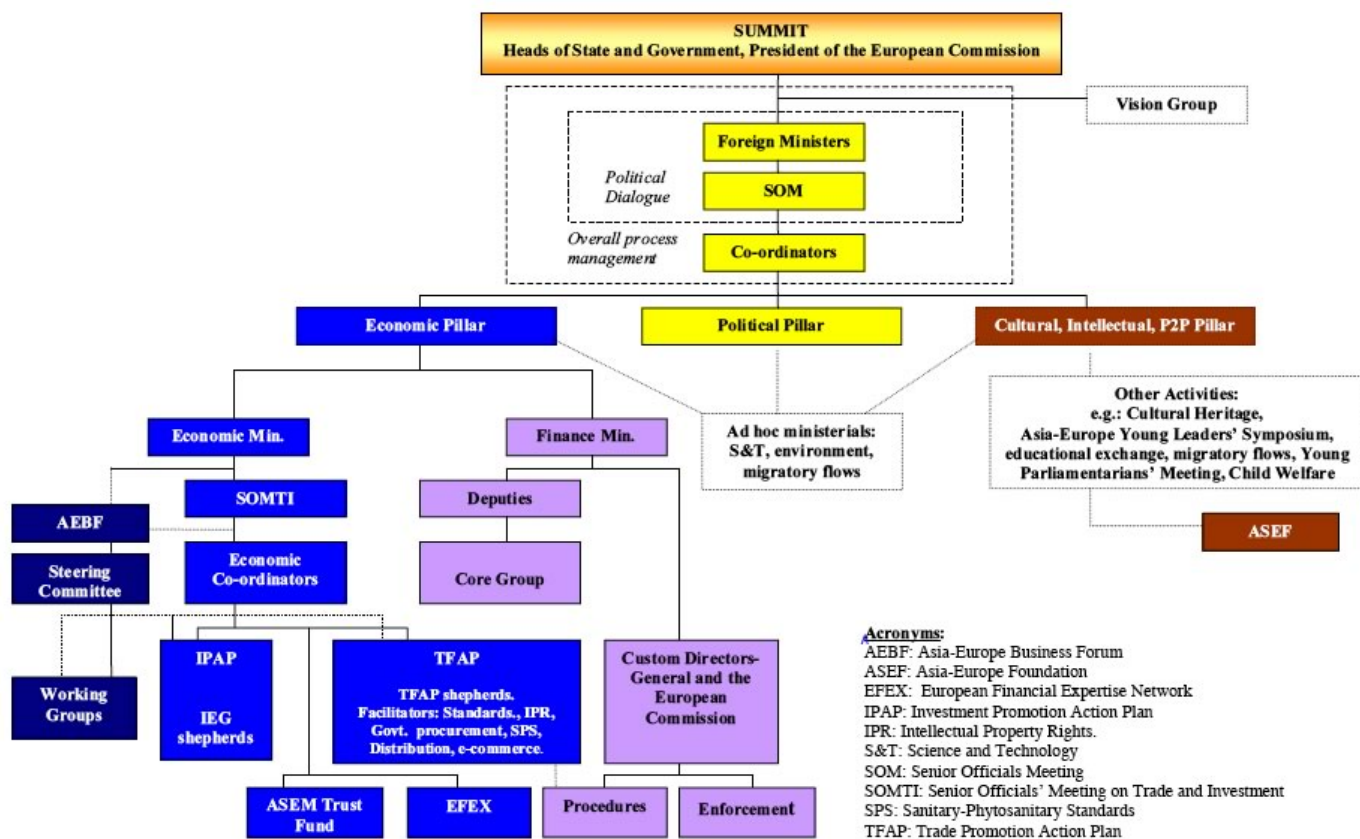
❖ **Vision into the 21st Century**

1. Recognising that the Asia-Europe Meeting was initiated with the aim of strengthening links between Asia and Europe in this era of growing global interdependence, ASEM partners have agreed to strive for a common goal of maintaining and enhancing peace and stability as well as promoting conditions conducive to sustainable economic and social development. ASEM Leaders envisage Asia and Europe as an area of peace and

shared development with common interests and aspirations such as upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, respect for democracy, the rule of law, equality, justice and human rights, concern for the environment and other global issues, eradication of poverty, protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of intellectual endeavours, economic and social development, knowledge and educational resources, science and technology, commerce, investment and enterprise.

To this end, Asia and Europe, building a comprehensive and future-oriented partnership, should work together to address challenges and to translate them into common opportunities. They should in particular be addressed through our dialogue and joint endeavours in relation to political, economic, and social, cultural and educational issues. ASEM partners also recognise the need to work together in addressing the new challenges posed by, among other things, globalisation, information technology, e-commerce and the New Economy.

2. Synergy between Asia and Europe will be of tremendous value, not only for the two regions but also for the global community as a whole. Strengthened dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe in a spirit of equal partnership and mutual benefit will also enhance international cooperation, thereby contributing positively to security, prosperity and sustainable development for the benefit of all and to building a new international political and economic order, taking into account changes in the international arena including globalization.



V. Meetings

ASEM Summit is held every second year in Asia and Europe alternatively. This is the highest level of decision making body in the process. Besides the attendance of the Heads of State/Government from Asia and Europe, the Summit also features accompanying ministers,

Head of the European Commission and the Secretary-General of ASEAN. The dates and venues of the ASEM Summits which had been held since the establishment of ASEM are as follows:

The *summits*, attended by the heads of state and government of respective members, have been held in:

- ASEM 1: March 1–2, 1996,  Bangkok, Thailand
- ASEM 2: April 3–4, 1998,  London, United Kingdom
- ASEM 3: October 20–21, 2000,  Seoul, South Korea
- ASEM 4: September 22–24, 2002,  Copenhagen, Denmark
- ASEM 5: October 8–9, 2004,  Hanoi, Vietnam
- ASEM 6: September 10–11, 2006,  Helsinki, Finland
- ASEM 7: October 24–25, 2008,  Beijing, China
- ASEM 8: October 5–6, 2010,  Brussels, Belgium

Next summit to be held: ASEM 9: November 5–6, 2012,  Vientiane, Laos

ASEM has also made contribution to the people of Asia and Europe and the people of the world at large. In ASEM, human dimension is an important part of its process. ASEM participation in the people sector in the society is in-line with its three main pillars and include various forum offshoots such as:

- Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF)
- Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP)
- Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum (AEPF)
- ASEM Eco-Innovation Center (ASEIC)

Aside of summits, *ministerial meetings* are being held concerning the cultural, economic, educational, environmental, finance or foreign affairs issues, attended by the relevant Government ministers. The 8th ASEM Foreign Ministers meeting at May 28–29th 2007 in Hamburg was attended by the 10 members of ASEAN, the 27 member countries of the EU, the European Commission, the EU High-Representative Javier Solana, the ASEAN General-Secretariat, China, Japan, South Korea, India, Pakistan and Mongolia. The 9th ASEM Foreign Ministers meeting was held on 25–26 May 2009 in Hanoi, Vietnam. The 10th ASEM Foreign Minister's Meeting was held in Gododllo, Hungary on 06–07 June 2011.

Furthermore, *ministerial conferences* are held when needs arise to discuss specific issues and areas beyond the regular ministerial meetings.

VI. ASEM 9 Summit

Since its inception in 1996, the ASEM process has remarkably evolved. It has expanded its membership from 26 partners in 1996 to present 48 partners from Asia and Europe, thus reflecting the deepening cooperation between the two regions. The ASEM process has made significant contribute to the promotion of mutual understanding, peace, stability, development and prosperity of Asia and Europe.

Throughout these years, ASEM has gone through the period of complex and rapid changes. It has faced with many challenges such as climate change, economic and financial crisis, high prices of food and energy, natural disasters, outbreak of infectious diseases and others, which

have negatively impacted the socio-economic development of the two regions. Despite the challenges, today ASEM remains relevant and continues to be an important forum for ASEM partners to share their thoughts, exchange views and explore ways and means in promoting better understanding and enhancing cooperation between Asia and Europe and in addressing the various challenges.

The 9th Asia-Europe Meeting Summit or ASEM 9 will be held on 5 - 6 November 2012 in Vientiane, Lao PDR under the theme: **“Friends for Peace, Partners for Prosperity”**. It will provide yet another important occasion for Leaders of Asia and Europe to discuss regional and international issues of common interest and concern, including, among others, food and energy security, sustainable development, financial and economic crisis, climate change, natural disaster response, socio-cultural cooperation and future direction of ASEM.

Besides the hosting of ASEM 9, the Lao PDR will also organise other important ASEM sideline events, namely Asia-Europe People’s Forum (AEPF), Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP) and for leaders of Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) in Vientiane in 2012. The Government and multi-ethnic people of the Lao PDR feel honored to be entrusted to host the ASEM 9 and related events and are looking forward to warmly welcoming all ASEM Leaders and delegates to Vientiane in 2012.



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